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REMARKS

Claims 1-8, 14, 15, 17-21, 23-25 and 28-34 are pending. The examiner has rejected claims 1-8, 14, 15, 17-21 and 23-25. The applicant respectfully submits that the rejected claims are allowable as originally filed. The applicant has further added new claims 28-34, which the applicant believes are also allowable. No new matter has been added. For example, the "sheet material" recited in claim 28, is supported at least at page 2, line 29 through page 3, line 2.

Informalities and claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112:

In response to the examiner's objection to the title of the invention, the applicant has amended the title to substantively following the examiner's suggestion. Although the applicant believes that the original title is descriptive, the title suggested by the examiner is acceptable to the applicant.

The examiner has rejected claims 8, 18-21 and 23-25 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2 as being indefinite for the use of the word "generally" in qualifying centering of the edge weld. The applicant respectfully disagrees. That some claim language (including words of degree such as "substantially") may not be precise does not automatically render a claim invalid. *Seattle Box Co., v. Industrial Crating & Packing, Inc.*, 731 F.2d 818, 826 (Fed. Cir. 1984). Acceptability of the claim language depends on whether one of ordinary skill in the art would understand what is claimed, in light of the specification. *MPEP* 2173.05(b). In the present application, the specification provides guidance for measuring the degree of centering of the edge weld. For example, the degree of centering is measured in terms of how much of the weld spot area extends into each of the welded components. See, page 9, lines 18-22 and Figures 2a and 2b. As the component having the edge that is being welded has a finite thickness, there is a range of positions of weld spot for which the center of the weld spot is located within the thickness of that component. Further, one of ordinary skill in the art would know the normal range of tolerances in positioning a weld spot for a given welding technique. The applicant therefore submits that one of ordinary skill in the art would understand what is claimed, in light of the specification and that claims 8, 18-21 and 23-25 are therefore not indefinite.

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Claim rejections based on prior art:

The examiner has rejected claims 1-8, 14, 15, 17 and 18 and being anticipated by various references under 35 U.S.C. § 102. The applicant respectfully disagrees.

As a overview, the invention disclosed and claimed in the present application concerns *welding* a first component (such as a flexure) having a major surface and an edge to a surface (such as that of a loadbeam) of a second component in such a way that a major surface overlaps with the surface of the second component. The terms "major surface" indicates a structure in which the dimensions of the major surface is greater than at least some dimension of the other surfaces of the first component. In contrast, the term "edge" refers to a minor surface of the first component that meets the major surface of the first component; i.e., the edge is a relatively narrow side surface of the first component. See, page 8, lines 25-27. These characteristics of the invention are not found in the cited references.

More specifically, the examiner has rejected claims 1-7, 14 and 18 as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,371,760 (*Zavilenski*). The applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

Independent claim 1 recites the features of positioning a *major surface* of the first component in contact with a surface of the second component and of forming an edge *weld* at the *edge*. The claim further recites that the edge weld extends *beyond the edge* onto the first and second components. *Zavilenski*, in contrast, does not teach a first component having a "major surface" as that term is used in the present application. In addition, even if the side surfaces of the bracket body 52 could be considered an "edge" of the first component, the weld formed between it and the pad 52 does not extend beyond the edge. *Zavilenski*, therefore, does not anticipate claim 1.

Claims 2-7, 14 and 18 are ultimately dependent on claim 1 and therefore each contain additional features and not anticipated by *Zavilenski* for at least the same reasons that claim 1 is not anticipated by the same reference. Additionally, at least some of these dependent claims contain additional features not found in *Zavilenski*. For example, claim 2 requires generally centering the edge weld *on the edge*. To the extent any side surface of the component 54 of *Zavilenski* could be considered an edge, there is no teaching in *Zavilenski* of generally centering the weld on the edge. Claim 4 recites applying welding energy from a

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side of the components that is opposite a side of the components on which the edge is located. *Zavilenski* does not disclose this feature. Claim 8 recites that one of the first and second components comprises a flexure and the other of the first and second components comprises a load beam. This feature is not disclosed by *Zavilenski*. The applicant therefore submits that claims 2-7, 14 and 18 are also allowable over *Zavilenski*.

Next, the examiner rejected claims 1-7 and 18 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,261,701 (*Filed's*). The applicant respectfully disagrees with the examiner's position. *Filed's* discloses joining plate-like pieces at the opposing edges, *i.e.*, forming a butt joint. There is therefore no teaching in *Filed's* of overlapping any *major surface* as claimed by claim 1 and its dependent claims, including claims 2-7 and 18. Thus, claims 1-7 and 18 are not anticipated by *Filed's* and should be allowed.

The examiner further rejected claims 1-5, 17 and 18 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,821,494 (*Albrecht*). However, *Albrecht* discloses not *welding*, as required by each of the rejected claims, but laser solder reflow, which involves melting a filler material to attach two component, whereas welding involves fusing components themselves without any filler. In fact, the two components being soldered together in *Albrecht* do not even directly contact each other, making *Albrecht* fundamentally different from the invention claimed in the present application. The applicant therefore respectfully submits that claims 1-5, 17 and 18 are allowable over *Albrecht*.

Finally, the examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 8 and 15 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,754,368 (*Shiraishi*). However, it is unclear precisely which features that examiner was pointing to in referring to Figures 2A and 21A, as *Shiraishi* does not contain any drawings by those labels. In any event a close inspection of *Shiraishi* reveals that it discloses only welding spots in the interior of any overlapping regions between two components. *See, e.g.*, welding spots labeled "27", "28", "87", "88", "137", "138", "157", "158", "177" and "178". *Shiraishi* therefore does not anticipate any of the rejected claims.

Allowable subject matter:

The applicant acknowledge with appreciation the examiner's indication that claims 19-21 and 23-25 contained allowable subject matter. As discussed above, the applicant

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believes that these claims as originally filed are allowable under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2, and that the base claim and any intervening claims are allowable over prior art. The applicant therefore submits that claims 19-21 and 23-25 are in condition for allowance.

The applicant further believes that newly added claims 28-34 are also allowable.

The applicant therefore respectfully submits that all pending claims are allowable and requests a favorable determination on their patentability.

Respectfully Submitted,

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